

Into the 21st Century: Intergenerational Programming

Intergenerational Programming¹

Overview

Ours is a nation segregated by age. However, recent societal trends suggest a need for increased communication and interaction across generations. Such intergenerational interaction would not be a new cultural phenomenon. In fact, at one time, it was the norm rather than the exception.

For the majority of today's families, there are limited opportunities for meaningful interaction. Age segregation marked by wide geographic differences between the places of residence of parents, children, and grandchildren, juxtaposed with attitudes that promote social and physical separation, result in too few genuine opportunities.

Intergenerational means being or occurring between generations. What, then, is intergenerational programming? Albeit there are many formulations, we subscribe to the definition proffered by American Association of Retired Persons. It defines intergenerational programming as the "purposeful bringing together of different generations in ongoing mutually beneficial planned activities designed to achieve specified program goals. Through intergenerational programs, young and old share their talents and resources, supporting each other in relationships that benefit both the individuals and the community," (AARP, 1994).

■ The Importance of Intergenerational Programming

Generally speaking, attitudes toward the elderly tend to reflect several stereotypes: (1) needy, feeble, dependent and poor; (2) caring, loving and giving; (3) frightened, lonely, and alone; and (4) affluent and self-absorbed. Accuracy lies somewhere within and between these four. As Extension professionals, we cannot overstate the shortsightedness in ignoring the social challenges presented by an aging society. The same can be said if we continue to promote an age-segregated society.

The need for intergenerational programming signals a fundamental— and perhaps long term — shift in social values. We know and have known for some time

many of the correlates of interaction across generations, as well as the correlates of the lack thereof. There is a broad range of intergenerational issues facing families and communities. What are some of the more critical issues? I submit the following:

1. Grandparents raising grandchildren; relatives raising younger relatives

The reasons for this old tradition made new again represent hard core correlates of issues such as parenting, society's tolerance of substance abuse and irresponsible choices about human reproduction, the cost of establishing households, etc. Thus, an important element that undergirds the need for increased intergenerational programming is the role of family in nurturing individual growth, and supporting and protecting its members in times of adversity. In brief, the most valuable gift you can give to another is a good example. That is what so many grandparents and relatives have decided with regard to the estimated 4+ million children involved. This is an issue about people we care most about: children, grandchildren, and the elderly. It is security issue, and it is a just and good cause.

2. Nutrition education across generations

We know from our research that when there are several generations with obese or diabetic family members, family food patterns and values about food are part of the reason these serious health issues persist. Again, the role of family is important, especially in transmitting attitudes and behaviors that build stronger generations and stronger communities.

3. Family violence

There have been increased incidences of violent behavior within the family, and increased incidences where underage children and the elderly are often the victims of family violence. It is also the case that juveniles increasingly are perpetrators of family violence. The several issues undergirding this trend appear to be without the usual and customary socio-economic factors. That is to say, the issues driving the need for intergenerational programming in this instance cut-across geographic, economic, race, ethnic, religious, and gender factors. Each of the three issues identified are all too common, and they are costly and controllable. Authentic, courageous leadership is required.

■ Benefits of intergenerational programs

An age-integrated society allows for the creation of a mosaic incorporating the best in difference across generations. Perhaps for this issue we can effectively borrow from literature on improved race relations in looking at how the purposeful bringing together of different *age* groups is beneficial to society. As you have probably guessed, there are many issues which intersect with age and ethnicity lines. In brief, we benefit from intergenerational programs through:

1. Improved relations between young and older adults; as individuals learn more about each other, stereotypes and barriers to interaction disappear.
2. Positive effect on problems—family problems (as evidenced by the recent wave of murders by juveniles within school boundaries) can often spill over into the community, and with devastating consequences. When generations work together, even on the problems of troubled children, much can be achieved.
3. Empowered communities — people begin to care about each other.

Further, intergenerational programs, by their very nature, are ecological programs, as they address issues of family across the life cycle. Further, they foster a willingness to cross disciplinary and cultural boundaries to solve problems.

Inventory of the Cooperative Extension Response

How has the Cooperative Extension System responded to this unbounded, critical, and emerging societal issue? The System appears to not only be at the table, but to be a power broker.

From the reports we received, there appears to be ten broad categories, both content and process, in which programming is occurring. These are, in alphabetical order: (1) aging awareness, (2) arts and culture, (3) care giving, (4) employment, (5) family economics and resource management, (6) health, nutrition, physical activity, and wellness, (7) horticulture and leisure activities, (8) professional preparation and volunteer development, (9) service learning, and (10) youth development. By far the dominant themes are care giving and aging awareness. A recurring theme in most of the programs is aging awareness and youth development. Also, it appears our programming focuses largely on three target audiences: children and youth, the elderly, and Extension and other professionals, and volunteers.

At Cornell University through the Horticultural Intergenerational Learning as Therapy (HILT) the elderly increase their physical activity and mental stimulation, and youth are introduced to horticulture and to the elderly.

erly. A replication manual, *Using Plants to Bridge the Generations*, is available.

Charlotte W. Nakamura reports from Hawaii a program that is focused on literacy education. Called Read To Me, members of the Family and Community Education Association created and distributed 1500 “reading aprons,” and promoted the program to schools and communities. Members read stories at libraries, shopping malls, schools, and at large bookstores.

The CES record of accomplishment suggests that what counts is not the number of hours we put in, rather, how much we put into the hours. Congress wants to know more about the value our programs add to the lives of the customers we serve. The responses to our mini survey offers evidence that our programs add value, and make a difference.

■ Challenges and Opportunities for Programming

We do not yet have a full or comprehensive picture of the many excellent programs being implemented by Extension personnel. However, there are many challenges and opportunities represented by voids in our programming. We can use intergenerational programming to assist with such critical issues as:

■ literacy

It is estimated that more than 40 million children and adults are illiterate; this includes a growing immigrant population minimally literate in their first language and in English. Intergenerational programs which provide literacy training can be linked to programs which create awareness about aging, explore careers, teach time honored values such as respect for property and self-esteem, and which teach about arts and culture. It should be understood that illiteracy is a correlate of many other serious social issues involving children and youth, including juvenile violence and crime.

■ children exposed to violence

We must look anew at collaboration at the local, state, and regional levels. While many of the programs we implement feature some form of collaboration, I note that our partnering groups are our traditional friends. But to reach diverse audiences, we must seek out a wider array of partners, particularly those which have credibility with the underserved populations we need to serve.

■ health and wellness

Intergenerational programs focused on health and wellness provide many mutual rewards for seniors and youth alike. Walking and other low impact physical activities can be shared between youth and the elderly, even those that are frail and home bound. Mental stimulation can help keep the elderly mentally alert, and allow them to share with youth their lifetime experience.

CES must look anew at collaboration at the local, state, and regional levels. While many of the programs we implement feature some form of collaboration, our partnering groups tend to be our traditional friends. To reach diverse audiences, we must seek out a wider array of partners, particularly those which have credibility with the underserved populations we need to work with. Further, our efforts can be accelerated through collaboration. Here we can improve our capacity to work *with* families and communities versus working *for* families and communities.

Replicable programs models, which are culturally and linguistically correct, and which are available in print or electronically are sorely needed. Rather than drawing rigid boundaries between services and supports for families, government must be able to respond in a flexible manner. Families do not come in neat packages, nor do they come with directions. The types of support they often need does not fall into discrete program areas or categories, thus government cannot respond with a one-size- fits-all policy. Each member of a family must be seen in the context of their family and community, not as a disconnected individual with isolated problems.

■ Conclusion

To the extent we are able to document that we are actively engaged in providing effective responses to critical societal issues, which in turn increases the nation's capacity to reduce and prevent social problems, we are able to build on and expand our advocacy support for CES at local, state and national levels. Thus, systematic and substantive impact evaluation will be increasingly important to our ability to remain relevant in the 21st Century. The only effective preparation for tomorrow is the right use of today.

Bibliography

American Association of Retired Persons. (1994). *Connecting the generations: A guide to intergenerational resources*. Washington, DC: Author.

Coates, J. F. (1996). *What's ahead for families*. Bethesda: World Future Society.

Edelman, M. W. (1995). *Guide my feet: prayers and meditations on loving and working for children*. Boston: Beacon Press.

National Recreation and Park Association. (1996). *About intergenerational programs*. Arlington, VA: Author.

¹Extracted from remarks made by Alma C. Hobbs, Ph.D., Deputy Administrator, F4-HN/CSREES/USDA.

Programming Models

Aging Awareness

Building Bridges

A collaborative program which provides opportunities for children and seniors to interact and which targets the frail and home bound elderly. Through the program's three components — education, friendship, and caring — children learn from and develop positive images of the elderly and help older adults achieve a sense of fulfillment. In consideration of the needs of the elderly and the children, a variety of appropriate activities occur, such as a "Building Bridges Fair," letters and art delivered to seniors, visits to nursing homes, tutorial assistance for children, interviewing, storytelling, reading, and dancing. Promotional materials, including a calendar, have been developed.

Nina Chen
University Extension
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO

Youth Exchanging With Seniors (Y.E.S.)

Project Y.E.S. promotes positive intergenerational relationships between youth and seniors by training 4-H Club and Future Homemakers of America volunteers to provide assisted-living services that enhance independent lifestyles of the elderly in rural communities. Youth provide housekeeping, personal, lawn care, and minor home and auto repair services for the elderly; the recipients of the services reciprocate by sharing their time and talent with the youth; and youth learn about the aging process, communicating between generations, and career opportunities in family and consumer sciences, health and social services. The program has available a training manual, a youth service provider workbook, video cassettes, certificates and t-shirts.

Kathy Volanty
Texas Agricultural Extension Service
Lubbock, TX

Generation Celebration

Designed to help students develop communication skills, and to foster positive attitudes about older persons, this awareness program uses a variety of activities including family history, simulation, heritage crafts and household skills, shared recreation, and visits to long-term care and other service settings. Local adaptations by communities include "Generation Connections," through which teams of high school youth work with an Area Agency on Aging to provide regular telephone reassurance to a vulnerable older person. "Simple Pleasures"

is a planned new dimension through which youth make handcrafted items for and learn communication skills that help to comfort or improve the functioning of dementia victims in family and institutional care settings. The program has available a 4-H juried curriculum guide.

Christy Kohler
Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach
University Park, PA

Walk In My Shoes

A 4-H program to increase youth understanding of elders, to increase community responsiveness to the needs of older persons, and to encourage intergenerational contact.

Molly McErlean
Cooperative Extension Service
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Urbana-Champaign, IL

Arts & Culture

Elder's Wisdom, Children's Song: Community Celebration of Place

With the assistance of a troubadour, school children listen to oral histories of local elders in rural and urban Minnesota communities, and create songs, recitations, and art based on the personal stories. The program culminates in a community-wide celebration honoring the elders that is recorded on audio and video tape. The program will be replicated in other communities over the next two years in preparation for the "Minnesota Celebration of Community" during the Year 2000, including a statewide conference planned by a partnership led by the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Janet Hively
University of Minnesota Extension Service
St. Paul, MN

Caregiving

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

A new program through which grandparents are introduced to new parenting techniques, learn about community agencies and how to access the same, achieve computer literacy, and learn mutual support techniques. Grandparents participate in monthly support group meetings and seminars, and receive a newsletter.

Sam Quick
University of Kentucky Extension
Lexington, KY

Grandparents As Parents

A parent education series offered through a community resource center to grandparents parenting their grandchildren.

Charlene Baxter
Cooperative Extension
University of New Hampshire
Durham, NH

Grandparents As Parents

The Cornell Applied Gerontology Research Institute is a foundation for Cornell Cooperative Extension programming. Three Extension educators lead community education activities and serve as a resource to other extension educators throughout the state. Efforts include workshops, newsletters, support groups, collaboration, cooperation, and use of resources of the community agencies and organizations.

Rhoda Meador
Cornell Applied Gerontology Research Institute
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Grandparents Facing Parenting — Again

An Introductory training program for professionals focusing on issues faced by grandparents raising grandchildren.

Dena Targ
Cooperative Extension
Purdue University
Purdue, IN

Employment

Neighbor/Relative Child Care

Part of Pennsylvania's response to welfare reform, this new child care provider training program trains low-income individuals who are interested in working as family child care providers for the children of relatives and friends.

James E. Van Horn
Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach
University Park, PA

Family Economics

Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?

A program for transferring non-titled property among (contesting) family members after the death of a

family member. An estate planning process through which individuals can plan to share with their family members their possessions and record the meanings (and stories) associated with the same while they are alive.

Shirley Barber
University of Minnesota Extension Service
St. Paul, MN

Gardening, Leisure Activities

Intergenerational Garden Project

4-H youth and YMCA day campers interact with residents of a county nursing home.

Sally W. Barney
Cooperative Extension
University of New Hampshire
Durham, NH

Health, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Wellness

EFNEP

Senior citizen volunteers care for the children of EFNEP program participants while the participants attend class.

Anne S. Cornell
Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach
University Park, PA

Professional Preparation and Volunteer Development

Project GUIDE

Project GUIDE (Growth and Understanding of Intergenerational Programming through Distance Education) is a learning experience which trains youth development educators and other human service practitioners to learn about and create intergenerational programs uniquely suited for their own communities. Participants interact in a four week online course gaining knowledge about intergenerational program models and internet resources. As they interact in the course, learners build a network of colleagues for ongoing support of their programs as implementation unfolds.

Rhoda Meador
Cornell Applied Gerontology Research Institute
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Project EASE

Project EASE (Exploring Aging through Shared Experiences) is a model for developing intergenerational programs. Its goal is to bring groups of early adolescents (ages 9-13) together with senior citizens for meaningful goal-oriented interaction. Groups of elders and youth choose one of the following types of activities to engage in: joint service, shared group activity, and one-on-one matching. Course materials consist of a print-based leader's guide and member's guide.

Rhoda Meador
Cornell Applied Gerontology Research Institute
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Volunteer Development

With support of the state legislature, 4-H volunteers and families have been trained through statewide satellite broadcasts. A volunteer mentoring program has been developed for training volunteer mentors.

Kevin C. Kesler
Utah Cooperative Extension
Logan, UT

Volunteer Development

In collaboration with the county Health Department, Extension personnel train volunteers to provide intensive interaction with at-risk new parents, part of a home visitation program for vulnerable new parents. Through a second collaborative effort with the state chapter of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, Extension personnel train and provide oversight for Family Support Workers (classified state employees) who visit vulnerable parents in their homes. Family Support Workers also implement educational support groups for at-risk parents participating in the home visitation program.

Sally Martin
Nevada Cooperative Extension
Reno, NV

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Foundations for Educational Program Development and Public Service

A state project to address the information needs of grandparents raising grandchildren, and the professionals who work with this population. The project's primary aim is to assemble a collection of practical and educational resource materials to be used in the preparation of information packets for grandparents and professionals. It is a collaborative program which involves the North Carolina Division of Aging.

Luci Bearon
NC Cooperative Extension
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC

Youth Development

4-H Club Activities

Several 4-H youth development efforts generate high levels of interaction between youth and seniors. For example: a club conducts a monthly bowling activity for the elderly at their county nursing home; members of a 4-H rabbit club bring rabbits during their visits and have donated one rabbit to the nursing home; and a horse club has adopted a nursing home--its members visit with residents and share information about club activities.

Charlene Baxter
Cooperative Extension
University of New Hampshire

Resources

Durham, NH

Websites

NNFR Intergenerational Issues SIG

<http://www.nnfr.org/nnfr/igen/>

Dan Lago
Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach
University Park, PA

Growing Older

Creates public and staff access to information on community aging resources, extension resources, ISU aging courses, related websites, and interactive learning.

Colleen D. Jolly
Iowa State University Extension
Ames, IA

AoA's International Aging Page

<http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/international>

Includes three sections:(1) AoA-Related International Activities; (2) the International Year of Older Persons 1999; and (3) Other International Aging Resources. Intended to attract researchers, policymakers, students, providers of aging services, and the general public.

Administration on Aging

US Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, DC

New Materials

Going To Grandma's House...To Live

The Parent Place
2211 Wabash Avenue
Springfield, IL 62704

Generations Need Each Other: Youth and Older Adults — More Alike Than Different

Generations Need Each Other: Creating Relationships Between Older Adults and Youth

Mary Brintnall-Peterson
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Madison, WI 53703

Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children: An Intergenerational Action Agenda

Generations United
440 First Street, NW; 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2085

Networks, etc. (National, Regional, and State)

Wisconsin Intergenerational Network (WIN)

A statewide network of people of all ages who believe that interaction and cooperation among generations contribute vitally to the good of individuals and the well-being of society. The network seeks to facilitate, link, inform and advocate as a means of promoting intergenerational understanding and interdependence by making the best use of the skills of all generations.

Mary Brintnall-Peterson
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Madison, WI

Intergenerational Issues Special Interest Group (SIG)

The Intergenerational Issues Special Interest Group (SIG) is a part of the National Network for Family Resiliency, a program of the Children Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR) initiative. Its mission is to identify and improve resources for community educational programs on intergenerational perspectives to promoting development among high risk youth and families. Priorities are grandparents raising grandchildren, and community programs relying on intergenerational relationships. The SIG provides an open forum for discussion of issues in intergenerational programs, and for sharing ideas and opinions on program development.

Dan Lago
Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach
University Park, PA

Generations United (GU)

A national coalition on intergenerational policy, programs and issues. GU provides a forum for those working with children, youth, and the elderly to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation. It publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Together*; a directory of state and local intergenerational coalitions and contacts; and has been designated a national clearinghouse for intergenerational Learn and Serve programs. Currently, the organization has four main thrusts: (1) education, training and technical assistance; (2) public policy and awareness; (3) publications; and (4) the Special Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children Project.

Alison Frantz
Generations United
Washington, DC

Special Projects, New Initiatives

Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP)

A national program funded by the Brookdale Foundation to provide supportive services for programs focusing on grandparents and other relatives who have assumed the responsibility of surrogate parenting. The initiative calls attention to state and local needs by supporting the establishment of statewide networks of local organizations and statewide task forces, relative support groups, and community-based services to grandparents and other relatives raising grandchildren. At least two Cooperative Extension Programs (University of Wisconsin-Extension and Cornell University Extension) have received seed grants from the Foundation in support of efforts to encourage the involvement of Cooperative Extension personnel in this critical and emerging societal issue.

Luci Bearon
Cooperative Extension Service
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC

Grandparent Resource Inventory Project

A major project of the Network for Family Resiliency's Intergenerational Issues SIG, its purpose is to develop a web-based listing of educational resources for professionals and consumers on the subject of grandparents raising grandchildren. The project will identify and catalogue three kinds of information, including curricular material for training educators, service providers and consumers; consumer publications; and research abstracts.

Luci Bearon
NC Cooperative Extension Service
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC

Conferences, Special Events, etc.

International Year of Older Persons

Theme: *A Society For All Ages*
Launch date: October 1998

By resolution of the United Nations which encourages States, the United Nations system and other actors to take advantage of the Year to increase awareness of the challenge of the demographic aging of societies, the individual and social needs of older persons, their contributions to society, and the need for a change in attitude towards older persons.

International Day of Older Persons

October 1st of each year

By resolution of the United Nations; a strategy in implementing the International Plan of Action on Aging.

National Adult Family Care Organization Annual Conference

October 23-24, 1998
Arlington, VA

The third annual national meeting providing professional updates and networking opportunities.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Implications for Professionals and Agencies

National Satellite Video Conference
January 12, 1999

A national conference through which professionals will explore innovative and successful programs, resources, and services developed to meet the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren, and discuss next steps for their respective communities.

Mary Brintnall-Peterson
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Madison, WI

Dena Targ
Cooperative Extension Service
Purdue, IN

Brookdale RAPP Conference

June 4 -7, 1998
Washington, DC

An orientation and training conference (for RAPP grantees) addressing the needs of caregivers and the children in their care, and organizations and their pro-

grammatic needs. Status report on the results from RAPP initiative.

Awakening To Aging: Educating Leaders for an Aging Society

American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
June 25-27, 1998
Atlanta, GA

A national conference through which professionals addressed a broad range of issues impacting on the well-being of older adults, and thus families and communities.

Agencies, Associations, Centers, etc.

Generations Together: An Intergenerational Studies Program

University Center for Social and Urban Research
University of Pittsburgh
121 University Place, Suite 300
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Center for Intergenerational Learning

Temple University
1601 North Broad Street, Room 206
Philadelphia, PA 19122

American Association of Retired Persons

601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049

National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.

1424 K Street, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005

National Council on Aging

409 Third Street, SW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20024

National Aging Information Center

Administration on Aging
US Department of Health and Human Services
330 Independence Avenue, SW, Rm 4656
Washington, DC

Leisure and Aging Section

National Recreation and Park Association
2775 South Quincy Street, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22206-2204

Acknowledgements

The contributions of the following individuals and groups made this publication possible, and in a very short time! Their effort is appreciated.

Erika Posey, Intern, F4HN,CSREES/USDA
Denise Otto, Program Analyst, F4HN,CSREES/USDA
Gladys Gary Vaughn, National Program Leader,
F4HN,CSREES/USDA
Anna Mae Kobbe, National Program Leader,
F4HN,CSREES/USDA
Alison Frantz, Generations United
Southern State Program Leaders for Family and
Consumer Sciences
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension
Service/USDA
Sally Barney
Charlene Baxter
Luci Bearon
Mary Brintnall-Peterson
Nina Chen
Anne S. Cornell
Trudy Dunham
Barbara K. Froke
Sara Gable
Janet M. Hively
Colleen D. Jolly
Kevin Kesler
Janet Kurzynske
Dan Lago
Molly McErlean
Sally Martin
Rhoda Meador
Susan Meyers
Shirley A. Mietlicki
Josephine A. Swanson
Nicole S. Sigler
Dena Targ
Kathleen Thorpe
Kathy Volanty
Judith L. Warren
The Brookdale Foundation



United States
Department of
Agriculture



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio-tape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.